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JAKARTA FOR AID (NAKATSUMA)
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SUBJECT: EAST JAVA'S MT. KELUD VOLCANO: ERUPTION THREAT REMAINS WHILE
EVACUEES RETURN HOME

SURABAYA 00000058 001.4 OF 002

¶1. Increased seismic activity on Mt. Kelud, a volcano 90 km southwest of Surabaya, East Java caused authorities to raise the eruption threat level to 4, the highest possible. Authorities recommended the voluntary evacuation of residents within 10 kilometers of the mountain on October 16. Consulate General Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer visited two refugee centers and an Indonesian Army (TNI) refugee assistance staging area on 17 October. These sites are all within 15 kilometers of Mt. Kelud. One center is located in the town of Ngancar in Kediri Regency; the other center and TNI staging area are located in the town of Penataran in Blitar Regency. Kelud last erupted in 1990, killing at least 30 people according to press reports. A 1919 eruption claimed an estimated 5,000 lives.

ERUPTION "IMMINENT," BUT WHO KNOWS WHEN

¶2. As of 18 October, the warning status for Mt. Kelud remains at the highest level according to the Center for Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation. The Center's Head, Dr. Surono has told the press that while tremors have decreased in frequency, their amplitude and force remain strong according to instruments on the volcano itself. According to Surono, another clear warning sign of a possible eruption is the continued temperature increase in the caldera at 15m deep. Temperatures at this depth rose to 37.8 degrees centigrade on October 16 and to 38 degrees centigrade on October 17. The deformation process in the crater is also increasing, suggesting that an eruption is "imminent."

¶3. The National Coordinating Agency for Disaster Management (BAKORNAS PB) reported October 18 that a total of 22,154 persons had been displaced: 10,803 in Kediri district and 11,351 in Blitar. BAKORNAS reported that the number of persons displaced in Kediri had dropped from a high of 28,130 as villagers returned to their homes. According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), World Food Program (WFP) and UNICEF teams visited Blitar and Kediri to conduct rapid assessments. They reported that the number of displaced persons is decreasing and that the situation is not alarming.

VILLAGERS HEAD HOME

14. Police and Indonesian Red Cross sources at the camps told Pol/Econ Officer that 2000-3000 people were transported, or made their own way, to established shelters 15km away from Mt. Kelud in towns to the west and south of the volcano. However, the vast majority had returned home by noon on 17 October due to concerns over the security of their homes and animals. Displaced persons in Penataran told Pol/Econ Officer that many people were unwilling to leave during the initial call for voluntary evacuation. Local press reported that an elderly woman in the village of Sugihwaras convinced her fellow villagers not to leave for refugee centers in Ngancar. She said "Kelud will not erupt -- the signs are not yet there for an eruption, and anyway Mt. Kelud would not harm the people of this village."

15. During Pol/Econ Officer's visit, village officials and Indonesian Red Cross workers at an elementary school in Ngancar were preparing food for a possible return of displaced persons later in the day. Villages had been evacuated en masse and villagers kept together in the shelter. Signs posted on Ngancar's lampposts guided villagers to their respective shelters. The refugee center had registered 1,135 displaced persons by dawn on 17 October, however all but a few had returned to their village by 2 pm. The situation at Penataran was quiet too. Pol/Econ Officer spoke with six men who had left their coffee fields to stay in the shelter. They said 100 people remained scattered at shelters located in a village office and school, but the numbers were dwindling. Villagers with animals to look after felt pressure to return home.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

16. According to UNOCHA, BAKORNAS held a coordination meeting October 17 at the Crisis Center in Jakarta led by the Deputy for Emergency Response and attended by relevant government institutions to coordinate emergency supplies distributed to affected areas. The Department of Social Affairs has prepared

SURABAYA 00000058 002.4 OF 002

100 tons of rice at each district level and 200 tons of rice at the provincial level. Tents for public kitchens, clothing, ready-to-eat meals, and 1.5 tons of baby food supplements have been prepared for distribution. The Department of Health has already mobilized 50 doctors and 50 medical staff for 41 medical services in Kediri and Blitar with the support from community health posts (Puskesmas). 100,000 masks have also been distributed in Kediri, Blitar, and Malang districts.

17. The TNI unit assigned to Penataran set up tents and a field kitchen in an open area on the main street. A TNI officer displayed for Pol/Econ Officer a topographic map of Kelud and the surrounding villages. Approximately one hundred small villages were color coded to indicate their vulnerability in the event of an eruption. The TNI will use trucks to transport affected residents to assembly points 50km away if there is a serious eruption. One TNI officer said their unit in Penataran stood ready with seven tons of rice supplied by the Blitar Regency. The Governor assured journalists that the province stands ready with 500-1000 tons of rice, and the Blitar Regency has 200 tons of which 28 tons had been distributed already. Questions from journalists regarding rumors of inadequate food supplies had earlier reportedly angered the Governor of East Java during his October 17 inspection tour of the centers. Some media outlets have reported that the people in charge of providing food are running into difficulties due to inaccurate counts of the numbers displaced

18. COMMENT: Provincial and local government offices appeared to have the organization in place to handle a mass evacuation. Their challenge remains convincing villagers to leave in time to reach safety. Media reports that at least one village is staying put based on the assessment of a village elder. Similar statements by other local leaders could occur elsewhere, and hamper evacuation efforts. Additionally, the longer it takes Mt.

Kelud to erupt, the harder it will be to convince residents of the necessity of evacuating. END COMMENT.MCCLELLAND